APPENDIX F.

Address by Mr. Graham Anderson, Secretary, South Mysore Planters' Association.

As President of the South Mysore Planters' Association, I esteem it a great pleasure and a distinguished honor to have been deputed to represent an important section of the planting community on this most interesting occasion.

I venture to think that the Representative Assembly is an institution which will gradually but surely affect most beneficially the interests of both the Government and the people of Mysore.

Although the Province is comparatively a small one, yet each Taluk has some special requirements caused by differing local conditions or climatic peculiarities.

It may therefore be regarded as essentially desirable that delegates from every quarter should at least have an opportunity annually afforded them of meeting together and after hearing from the Chief officers of State the record of the operations of the past season and an indication of the views and intentions of the Government as regards the future, be permitted personally to explain the wants and necessities of the locality which they have the honor to represent, as well as to report to Government any available information relative to the position and prospects of the various local industries.

The cultivation of coffee has been carried on for many years past in the Malnad of this Province and is an excellent example of the value of industrial pursuits to a purely agricultural country, as it is the means of introducing money from England, the European continent and elsewhere and of affording constant congenial employment to many thousands of the laboring peasantry.

Although this last season the total value of coffee produced in Mysore may be approximately estimated at over 70 lakhs of rupees, it is very satisfactory to observe that under a steady continuance of careful culture and a just appreciation of climatic requirements, this amount may confidently be expected materially to increase within the next few years.

As the industry is one of the oldest, and most important in the Province, I may be permitted to give a brief account of the principal improvements which have been effected within the last two decades.

After years of careful study, it was found that not only was the description of coffee plant which was originally cultivated, unfited to the climatic conditions of certain localities, but that many of the Forest trees which had been left in the clearings as shade or shelter, had a detrimental, or even in some cases a pernicious, effect on the coffee around them.

A perfectly new system had therefore to be adopted.

About seventeen years ago four South Mysore Planters introduced experimentally the carefully selected seed of the Nak Nad variety of coffee and to this chance experiment must be attributed the yearly increasing prosperity which now attends the industry.

Observation having clearly proved to both the European and Native proprietors that this strain of plant was eminently well-suited to the soil and climate of our Malnad, a very large number of new estates were rapidly opened up and in addition to this, many of the old plantations were systematically re-planted and are now actually in better condition and more remunerative than they have ever been before.

The great problem of trade has also been satisfactorily dealt with. Objectionable trees have been removed in great numbers and millions of young plants of carefully selected and approved varieties have been propagated and established instead of them.

It will therefore be seen that the Mysore Planters in many cases have not only had to remove their original coffee but have had to grow a new forest covering for the Nak Nad variety of plant which has been introduced and which now holds out the prospect of increasing prosperity for years to come.

The coffee industry is now therefore placed on a new and substantial basis which has taken many years of toil and the persistent application of local experience to effect and it is gratifying to me to be able to record that the renewed vigor which has been brought to bear on all improvements has been greatly sustained by the encouragement afforded by the excellent acreage assessment system which was sanctioned and adopted by the Government of His Highness the Maharaja immediately after the Rendition.

The planting community confidently relies on the Government continuing in the future the encouragement it has always so generously accorded in the past and I therefore feel that my duty as delegate to this Assembly is simply to indicate the direction in which some special action on the part of Government appears to be highly desirable in order to meet the various undoubted difficulties which are experienced in the practical working of the details of three ordinances, the provisions of which have been extended to the Planting Districts.

I allude to Act XIII of 1859 for the punishment of persons who, after receiving advances, abscond without fulfilling the terms of their contracts; the Coffee Stealing Prevention Act and the rules at present in force for the punishment of the owners of cattle who carelessly allow their herds to wander into our estates and cause much loss and annoyance.

In regard to the Breach of Contract Act, I venture to submit that the protection it affords is under any circumstances unsatisfactory and most imperfect; but from the ruling in a case recently conducted by a planter, it would appear that new restrictions and limitations have been ordered by the High Court which will render the provisions of the Act perfectly unsuited to the requirements of the employers of large numbers of agricultural laborers in this Province.

I am led to believe that an official opinion has been expressed that it is improper to advance a cooly more than a small specified amount and that Magistrates have been forbidden to grant warrants unless they are applied for within 6 months from the time of the cooly absconding.

I have also perused another official opinion in which the system of advancing was considered to induce conditions savouring of slavery.

I cannot but think that these opinions have been given in some exceptional case or under some misconception of the conditions and circumstances under which money advances are given out in the Planting Districts.

The advance system must entirely collapse and the interests of all planters must assuredly be gravely imperilled if orders of this nature come into force.

The advances are given to coolies for many purposes, among which may be mentioned the following:—

1. To enable them to pay off old debts carrying exhorbitant interest and thus free them from a condition of abject slavery.

2. To enable them to pay Government taxes in unremunerative seasons.

3. To enable them to re-build houses in their villages and to buy cattle to work their lands when not employed on the estate.

4. To pay the expenses of marriages or funeral ceremonies occurring in their families.

5. To purchase land.

I venture therefore to assert most emphatically that the advances and regular employment given by the planting community are calculated to greatly ameliorate the condition and prospects of the laboring peasant.

All that is required by the planter is that the cooly taking money in anticipation will fulfill his promise to work regularly or at stated periods on the plantations and repay the amount out of his regular wages at a specified time or at his own convenience.

The maintenance of a regular supply of labor is essential in the conduct of any industry, but a failure of the supply at certain critical seasons of the year means a ruinous loss to the planter.

Lakhs of rupees have been given out in the various planting Districts of Southern India and although immense losses have been sustained, still the system is one which cannot be abruptly discontinued.

I am perfectly certain that if there is any limitation of amount or arbitrary fixing of dates for repayment, not only will the number of cases arising under the Act alarmingly increase, but the working classes will revert to the old custom of borrowing money at a ruinous rate of interest from the local money lenders and many flourishing industries will inevitably suffer in consequence.

Briefly, I may say that all that is required is, that the Act may be worked so that those who have to make advances to their laborers and who afford them constant congenial employment with good wages may be protected adequately against loss and against fraud.

In regard to the Coffee Stealing Prevention Act, all that can be desired is, that its provisions be strictly enforced, both in the coffee districts and as far as Mangalore and Bangalore, whither the coffee is sent in carts for preparation

The sections which provide authority to demand the production of accounts, if vigorously worked, would at once put an effectual check on the receivers of stolen coffee and also on all who are accustomed to bring it to the various bazaars and shops and exchange it for articles of daily consumption.

As the subject of cattle trespass is now engaging the earnest and united consideration of the various associations in Southern India, it will be sufficient for me to say that it is a matter well worthy of the attention which has been directed to it and that it is most sincerely to be hoped that the solution of the many difficulties which surround it may soon be effected and some comprehensive arrangement introduced which, while carrying with it adequate protection to the proprietors of valuable estates, may meet with the requirements and approval of the Government of India.

In conclusion, I have the honor to avail myself of this opportunity of respectfully offering my humble congratulations on the success which has attended the Mysore Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition.

In all civilized countries such institutions sooner or later become essentially necessary and the Government of Mysore is to be congratulated on this further manifestation of its determination to leave nothing undone which may be calculated to develop the resources of this Province or contribute to the prosperity of its people.